

Application No. 10/812,640
Filed March 30, 2004
Amendment dated May 21, 2007
Response to Office Action mailed February 23, 2007

REMARKS

Claims 1-26 are pending with claims 4, 5, 7-10, 14, 15, 18-20, and 23-25 having been previously withdrawn from consideration based upon applicant's election of Species II which is represented by FIGS. 4-5c. Claims 3, 22 and 26 are cancelled herein. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 6, 11-13, 16, 17, and 21 are at issue.

Claims 1, 2, 11-13, 21 and 26 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,988,578 to Kikuchi, et al. Claims 3, 16 and 22 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as unpatentable over Kikuchi, et al in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,906,391 to Weir, et al. Claims 3, 16, and 22, stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as unpatentable over Kikuchi, et al in view of EP 1 122 134 to Jang et al.

The rejections, as they may apply to the claims presented herein, are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is directed to an elongate airbag including an airbag body that has a generally elongate configuration upon inflation thereof. As amended, claim 1 calls for a pair of elongate chambers in the airbag body that are inflated upon airbag deployment to extend in a longitudinal direction in the elongate airbag body. A pair of material panels of the airbag body are each formed into an elongate configuration extending in the longitudinal direction. Claim 1, as amended, calls for one of the material panels to define one of the elongate chambers independent of the other material panel, and both of the material panels cooperating to completely form the other elongate chamber. None of the relied upon art, either alone or in combination, discloses or suggests the recited material panels and how they form elongate chambers of an airbag body, as recited in amended claim 1.

As acknowledged in the Action, Kikuchi, et al fail to disclose a pair of material panels that are folded to form two airbag chambers. Weir, et al disclose several embodiments of dual-chambered airbags. However, in each instance where

a pair of fabric pieces are utilized to form the airbag, portions of both pieces are used to cooperate to form both chambers. Accordingly, Weir, et al do not include one material panel that defines one of the airbag chambers independent of the other material panel of the pair of material panels, as required in amended claim 1. In Jang, et al, the dual-chamber airbag cushion 500 is formed by a first panel 540 and a pair of second panels 550. While the first panel 540 defines the upper chamber 504, it takes both of the second panels 550 along with the first panel 540 to form the lower chamber 506. So Jang et al teach the use of there distinct panels to form the lower chamber 506 of their airbag 500. Thus, Jang et al fail to disclose or suggest the pair of material panels that cooperate to completely form the other elongate chamber of amended claim 1. Accordingly, it is believed that claim 1, and claims 2, 6 and 11 which depend therefrom, are allowable over the relied upon art.

Claim 12 is directed to an elongate airbag including an airbag body having an elongate configuration with an elongate internal space therein that is inflated to extend in a longitudinal direction. The airbag body includes at least one elongate material panel extending at least partially about the internal space, and at least one elongate tether panel that extends in the longitudinal direction and divides the internal space into at least two elongate chambers that both extend in the longitudinal direction. Claim 12 further calls for a plurality of vent holes in the tether panel spaced longitudinally from each other in the longitudinal direction along the elongate tether panel. As amended, claim 12 calls for a plurality of projections of the material panel spaced longitudinally from each other in the longitudinal direction along the material panel with each of the projections having an aperture for receiving a fastener to permit the airbag body to be arranged in an elongate, flat and folded configuration thereof prior to airbag deployment to extend along and be fixed to a vehicle pillar with the fasteners. None of the relied upon art discloses or suggests the recited material panel projections, as called for in amended

claim 12.

Kikuchi, et al teach that their airbag systems 30 are disposed in the vicinity of the lower end portions 18a of the left and right front pillars 18 (col. 3, lines 30-35). However, both of these airbag systems 30 are situated in the interior of the cowl 13 below a frangible lid 37 covering cowl opening 15 that is spaced from the lower end portion 18a of the pillar 18, as best seen in FIG. 4 of Kikuchi, et al. To secure the airbag system 30 in the cowl 13, a base 31 is attached to the bottom portion 14 of the cowl 13 with the inflator 32 attached on the base 31 and the airbag 33 attached to the inflator (see col. 3, lines 57-62 and FIG. 2 of Kikuchi, et al.). Accordingly, Kikuchi, et al clearly lack any teaching of an airbag panel having projections with apertures for receiving fasteners therethrough, as called for in amended claim 12. Moreover, since the Kikuchi, et al airbag 33 lacks such longitudinally spaced projections, the airbag 33 is not intended to be arranged in an elongate, flat and folded configuration prior to its deployment to extend along and be fixed to a vehicle pillar with the fasteners, as set forth in amended claim 12. Instead, Kikuchi, et al show the airbag systems 30 contained in the cowl 13, as discussed above. Accordingly, it is believed that claim 12, and claims 13, 16, and 17, are believed allowable over Kikuchi, et al.

Claim 21 is directed to a method of forming an airbag. Claim 21, as amended, calls for folding one material panel to completely form one elongate airbag chamber having an elongate configuration extending in a longitudinal direction. Amended claim 21 further calls for folding another material panel to completely form another elongate airbag chamber in cooperation with the one material panel with the other airbag chamber having an elongate configuration extending in the longitudinal direction. As amended, claim 21 further recites mounting the airbag to a vehicle pillar to extend longitudinally therealong prior to airbag deployment so that upon airbag deployment the airbag expands primarily in the direction transverse to the longitudinal direction rather than in the longitudinal direction. Kikuchi, et al fail to

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disclose or suggest the method of amended claim 21.

Kikuchi, et al do not disclose folding multiple material panels to form multiple airbag chambers as set forth in amended claim 21. As previously discussed, Weir, et al do not teach folding one material to completely form one elongate airbag chamber. Rather, in Weir, et al multiple panels are used to form both the upper and lower airbag chambers. In addition, Jang, et al do not disclose or suggest folding only two material panels to completely form another elongate airbag chamber, as called for in amended claim 21. Finally, Kikuchi, et al do not disclose or suggest mounting the airbag to a vehicle pillar to extend longitudinally therealong prior to airbag deployment so that upon airbag deployment the airbag expands primarily in the direction transverse to the longitudinal direction rather than in the longitudinal direction, as recited in amended claim 21. Instead, Kikuchi, et al teach that the airbag is mounted in the cowl, and is expanded primarily in the longitudinal direction so that it is deployed upwardly from the opening in the cowl and up along the vehicle pillar 18. Accordingly, it is believed that claim 21 is allowable over the relied upon art.

Based on the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1, 2, 6, 11-13, 16, 17, and 21 are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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